

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Proposed Rollback of Brazil's Environmental Regulations Could Trigger the Amazon Rainforest's Tipping Point with Devastating Global Impact**

*Washington, DC, 20 May 2025* - The Amazon Rainforest, home to some of the world's largest carbon storage and a key regulator of the global climate, may reach its tipping point sooner than expected. A proposed bill in Brazil to provide vast exemptions for large, medium, and small enterprises from having to acquire environmental permits before clearing forests is moving quickly and quietly through the country's congress. This legislation threatens to undermine global conservation agreements that finance mitigation and adaptation to the ongoing climate crisis, destroy resources for local and indigenous peoples, and bring the Amazon closer to a point of no return.

According to an analysis by the Socio-Environmental Institute (ISA), a leading Brazilian non-profit, based on the pipeline of projects currently awaiting permits that would automatically receive them under this new legislation, up to 44 million acres of forest - an area approximately the size of the US state of North Dakota or the country of Greece - would immediately come under threat of deforestation.

Marcos Woortmann, Adjunct Director of the Institute for Democracy and Sustainability, a nonprofit organization based in Brazil's capital, warns that the consequences of such legislative change will be felt worldwide. "In very practical terms, the approval of this bill could be the trigger for the Amazon's tipping point, where we could lose 50-70% of the rainforest." This tipping point, first documented by Brazilian scientist Carlos Nobre in 1990 and then reinforced in 2018 in a [joint publication](#) with Dr. Thomas Lovejoy, refers to the conversion of the Amazon's lush tropical forests into drier ecosystems, due to increased deforestation. The result would be catastrophic: additional carbon released into the atmosphere, accelerating the impacts of climate change everywhere; massive species extinction; dissipation of regional forest-based economies and livelihoods; and more.

A [study by Amazon Conservation](#), an independent US-based organization, reveals the current tipping point status: over 13% of the Amazon has already been lost to date, with approximately 211 million acres (85 million hectares) deforested. [Other studies](#) put the current deforestation estimates at 17-18%, depending on the varying definitions of the boundaries of the Amazon. The projections by Lovejoy and Nobre indicate that the threshold will be reached once 25% of the forest is lost. Nobre warns that "there are elements showing that all the southern Amazon forest, an area larger than 2 million km<sup>2</sup> [or over 494 million acres - about the size of Mexico] is very close to the tipping point. The dry season is 4-5 weeks lengthier with the last 45 years. And the southeastern Amazon forest has become a carbon source."

## **Fast Track to the Tipping Point**

This proposed legislation, titled PL 2159, would allow companies and individuals to “self-report” the potential environmental risks of development projects, eliminating current requirements for environmental assessments and permits. Industries from all sectors - including agriculture, silviculture, infrastructure expansion such as highway and railway, water and sewage works, dredging of existing waterways and ports, power-line additions, and mining activities - would have no checks and balances on the environmental damage their projects could bring not only to their designated areas of work, but tangentially to adjacent protected areas and Indigenous territories.

Woortmann cites the controversial paving of the Brazilian highway BR-319, which connects two cities in the heart of the Amazon, Manaus and Porto Velho, as a clear example of the impact this new legislation will have on deforestation. Without environmental safeguards, this single project could be enough to push the Amazon past its breaking point, thanks to the accelerating effect that roads have on deforestation. The development of large highways across pristine forests creates a “fishbone” pattern of deforestation that spreads from the highway as new, informal roads are created, giving illegal actors unprecedented access to remote and unguarded forests.

## **Global Impact**

Bruce Babbitt, an expert on environmental policies and former U.S. Secretary of the Interior, cautions that the impacts would be irreversible and widespread. “This proposal,” he says, “will lead to massive destruction of the Amazon rainforest. It should be opposed by all Brazilians and friends of Brazil in the international community.”

This rollback would run counter to minimum international safeguards for environmental protection in a year when the world’s eyes—and climate negotiations—will turn to Brazil as it hosts COP30 in the Amazon this coming November. By exempting development projects from needing environmental permits, the bill poses a threat to global food supply, conservation financing, and climate stability. Additionally, it goes against international trends aiming to create deforestation-free standards for exported/imported goods, potentially stalling the negotiation of trade agreements with key international partners such as the European Union, and eroding Brazil’s hard-won environmental reputation.

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## **About Amazon Conservation Association**

Amazon Conservation is an international conservation nonprofit working for the past 25 years towards building a thriving Amazon. The organization’s holistic approach focuses on working with local partners and allies to protect wild places, empower people, and put science and technology to work for conservation. Visit [amazonconservation.org](https://amazonconservation.org) for more information.

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